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FOREWORD

The subject of mechanisation in relation to Malayan agriculture is of such importance that the whole of this issue has been devoted to it in the form of a special mechanisation number. In this highly organised and progressively industrialised age, machinery must be made to play a far greater part than it does to-day in the economic and efficient development of agriculture in Malaya, both in regard to estates and small-holdings.

Government has charged this Department to make investigations to this end.

It might be well to point out at the outset that Malaya is a " rain forest country " and, as such, is specially suitable for the cultivation of tree crops. In regard to the cultivation of annual crops by mechanisation, the crop that requires the most urgent solution in this respect is padi. In this connexion the Department has carried out preliminary trials on certain classes of padi soils, and the various articles in this number will indicate the progress made to-date. The work undertaken, however, has been only of an exploratory nature and this, too, has been somewhat limited owing to the types of machines available. New types of machines are on order and some of these are now beginning to arrive. The need, too, for skilled operators is equally important but this I hope will now be solved by the establishment of a Departmental Mechanical Training School at Serdang. The training course to be provided will also be available to students at the College of Agriculture, and indeed will form part of the curriculum of the College. It will also be open to students from estates or to others interested.

There are many problems that lie ahead before it can be claimed that the successful and full mechanisation of padi cultivation is a *fait accompli*. For example, the soils and water table conditions are so variable that the preliminary trials undertaken clearly show that some of the types of agricultural machinery widely used for padi cultivation in other countries will require considerable major alterations before they can be successfully adapted to the conditions pertaining in Malaya. Where soil conditions are equal, the conditions that offer the best chances of success will be under controlled water conditions and in this and other respects the Drainage and Irrigation Department are co-operating wholeheartedly.

The need for the services of an Agricultural Engineer is patent, and with Government's approval it is hoped to obtain an experienced officer from Australia. In this connexion it is a pleasure to acknowledge the ready assistance being given by Mr. C. Massey, the Australian Commissioner for Malaya, in obtaining a suitable officer.

Finally, one can say the attack on the economic mechanisation of padi has been vigorously launched, and, with the enthusiasm of the officers carrying out these trials, I have no doubt of the final successful result.

F. Bamber

Director of Agriculture,
Malaya.

Kuala Lumpur,
30th January, 1948.